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West Bro

Creating a New Sense of Place

George Rahael is helping to shape the future of western Broward. In Coral Springs, his development company is moving ahead to create a pedestrian-friendly "downtown" environment. A few miles to the east in Lauderhill, the founder and CEO of Coral Springs-based Amera Cos. plans to turn a vacant retail center into a one-of-a-kind mixed-use center with a Caribbean theme.

"While west Broward has great homes, schools and playgrounds, people are yearning for a stronger sense of place," Rahael says. "Today, suburban residents are seeking out places where they can walk, dine, shop and enjoy with their friends and neighbors. There's a new generation of mixed-used centers that fulfill a basic human need."

For the past 15 years, Broward County's population growth, as well as its commercial development, has followed a western migration path. The opening of Interstate 595, Interstate 75 and the Sawgrass Expressway accelerated that flow, making it easy to commute south, east or north.

That new development in the western communities between US441/State Road 7 and the Everglades conservation area

West Broward's Class A Office Market

Market	Total Market (Sq. Ft.)	Vacancy Rate	Absorption (Sq. Ft.)
Plantation	1.25 million	18.2%	1,488
Southwest	1.23 million	6.1%	-2,847
Sawgrass Park	1.1 million	11.2%	214,344
Broward Total	10.5 million	14.8%	448,695

Source: CB Richard Ellis, yearend 2004 figures.

has been primarily horizontal: large scale office and industrial parks, garden apartments and single-family homes. As a result, a motorist can drive from one city to another without seeing much difference in architecture or land uses.

But that traditional pattern will be changing in the next few years, due to two key factors. First, the supply of raw, undeveloped land in western Broward is almost gone. That land shortage is already pushing up prices and making higher-density commercial and residential development an economic necessity for the private sector.

At the same time, Broward residents are

looking for ways to spend more time on their feet and less time in their cars. If they commute to jobs in Fort Lauderdale, Boca Raton or Miami, they don't want to have to drive 30 miles on a Friday night to enjoy a night on the town.

As a result, cities like Coral Springs, Plantation, Miramar, Sunrise, Davie, Pembroke Pines and Coconut Creek are looking to create new high-density town centers that combine retail, entertainment, office, cultural and residential uses. Generally following the principles of "new urbanism" — including wider sidewalks, pedestrian-oriented streetscapes, hidden parking, and

West Broward cities are striving to create more mixed-used gathering spots like The Walk in Coral Springs.

wward:



outdoor cafes — these new mixed-use centers are designed to recreate a traditional downtown setting in the suburbs.

"This is a natural progression for western Broward," says land use attorney Paul D'Arelli, a shareholder with Greenberg Traurig's Fort Lauderdale office. "Fort Lauderdale was always the downtown, and as everyone moved out west to reside, then those communities started to become office and employment centers themselves. Now people are saying, 'I don't need to be in downtown Fort Lauderdale to work and I don't want to drive there for dining or entertainment either. So, these new centers are an attempt to create a sense of place in built-out communities.'"

CORAL SPRINGS DOWNTOWN

Back in the 1960s, Coral Springs was carefully designed as a classic automobile-oriented bedroom community. "Like most suburbs, Coral Springs' development has focused on cars rather than pedestrians," says Rahael. Now, the intersection of University Drive and Sample Road is the focus of a four-year planning effort to create a new "Coral Springs Downtown."

Amera Corp. was selected by the city as

master developer to create a pedestrian-friendly center on approximately 50 acres at the crossroads of this suburban community. This spring the city was preparing a development of regional impact (DRI) study for the public-private mixed-use project — the next step in the process.

Coral Springs Downtown will be a mix of redeveloped properties and new construction offering office, retail, more than 1,000 residential units, a 150-room limited service hotel, and institutional facilities and a new government center. The project will total approximately three million square feet of redevelopment.

"We will see the creation of a distinctive 'main street,' a day-to-night destination that responds to market needs with a dynamic tenant roster," Rahael says.

Pending government approval, Amera plans to break ground this summer on the first phase of the project, One Charter Place, a four-story 100,000-square-foot building with ground-floor retail set "hard on the street" right up to the sidewalk, Rahael says. "This will be the first of many buildings," he says.

Amera is also working out an agreement with Bonita Springs-based WCI

Communities, one of the state's leading builders of luxury residential communities, to develop the residential component of Coral Springs Downtown as a vertical condominium project.

Amera has already achieved one successful Coral Springs redevelopment with The Walk, an open-air lifestyle center on University Drive.

"We have all the elements conducive to a pedestrian environment there, and the center has been warmly received," Rahael says.

This spring, The Walk hosted the city's annual Festival of the Arts, and every fourth Wednesday there is live music as well.

"For me, one of the most telling events was meeting my neighbor — who I hadn't seen for six months — at one of the events," Rahael says. "We had a cup of coffee and talked for an hour or so. It just shows the importance of having a place where adults can meet and relax after they've done their chores or finished running their kids around."

PLANTATION MOVES FORWARD

Coral Springs isn't the only western Broward community striving to create a "downtown." In order to encourage and

facilitate the development of a pedestrian-oriented city center, the city of Plantation has adopted a master plan and rezoned an approximately 860-acre area between University Drive, Pine Island Road, I-595 and Cleary Boulevard to a new mixed-use zoning category. The new "Plantation Midtown" concept is designed to encourage redevelopment of existing commercial sites with new residential components.

"Plantation has been a suburb of Fort Lauderdale with residential communities and malls, but no real town center," D'Arelli says. "When you want to walk around and take the kids somewhere, you pretty much have to go to downtown Fort Lauderdale. Now the city will be creating a mixed-use environment, essentially enabling redevelopment with residences."

The first mixed-use project slated for the north end of Plantation Midtown is The Veranda, according to D'Arelli, who assisted with the development approvals. The Veranda will include 398 residential units - slated to go on sale soon - and 44,000 square feet of retail space. Developer West City Realty Advisors was awaiting a building permit this spring before starting construction.

Another commercial property within the Midtown area that may be redeveloped is The Fountains, a 35-acre shopping center on University Drive that was purchased last year by Inland Southeast, a real estate investment trust (REIT). The new owner is exploring the addition of a residential component - a new usage made possible by the city's rezoning to a mixed-use district.

"Local jurisdictions want to see this new type of development happen, but antiquated suburban-style zoning doesn't allow that to occur," D'Arelli says. "Private developers see that the existing regulations don't work, so they are working with the city governments to make these types of projects feasible."

D'Arelli adds that the city has expressed a strong desire to see a residential component included in The Fountains plan. "We think on-site residences would provide a terrific captive audience for the current and prospective retailers at The Fountains and provide exciting new housing opportunities in Plantation," he says.

Additional infill residential development may occur in Plantation at the Broward Mall and Fashion Mall, which was recently purchased by a Chinese investment group,



Miramar Mayor Lori Cohen Moseley

according to D'Arelli.

"There are certainly a lot of exciting things happening in Plantation and throughout western Broward as well," he says.

MIRAMAR PLANS A TOWN CENTER

After seven years of planning, Miramar has taken a dramatic step forward in its quest to create a new town center. In March, the city selected Rockefeller Group Development Corp. (RGDC)

and Kimco Developers, Inc. to plan and develop Miramar Town Center, a 54-acre mixed-use neighborhood north of Miramar Parkway. The joint venture partners will purchase approximately 40 acres of city-owned land, which they will develop according to the approved master plan.

"A genuine town center was a keystone of Miramar's visioning process for nearly a decade and now it's soon to become a

to work and live and play, making it different from developments of the past. We're trying to create something that older communities have, but not the newer ones."

The city of Miramar will retain the site's remaining acreage, where a new city hall opened in 2004. That municipal building will eventually be joined by other civic projects, including a cultural arts center and library. Construction of the parking garages is expected to begin by the end of the year, to be followed by the library and the cultural arts center. The developers have announced that Lowell Homes will serve as the team's residential developer.

"Miramar Town Center is significant for the entire area," Jones says. "This is a unique opportunity to bring a sense of community to a very linear city, which stretches far to the east and west. We're very confident about delivering the kind of neighborhood setting that Miramar residents will be proud to enjoy."

Jones says the development team is now preparing specific plans and working drawings for the initial phases of the town

Taylor & Mathis leasing specialist Allison Adler says CEOs living nearby are driving demand at Miramar Centre Corporate Park.



reality," Miramar Mayor Lori Mosley says.

Miramar's plan calls for approximately 135,000 square feet of retail space; 45,000 square feet of

offices; 347 apartments; 133 townhouses; 17 units specially designed for work-at-home professionals; two parking garages; a mass transit hub; and a community recreation center.

"This is not a high-density facility - it will be four stories at the highest," says Edgar Jones, senior director of Florida Operations for Rockefeller Development Group. "It's an attempt to build a community-oriented, pedestrian-friendly environment. It's a place

center. "It's like a Rubik's cube," he says, "in that you have to build some roads and a parking garage first, while also starting the residential, office and retail components."

SUNRISE GOES VERTICAL

As western Broward approaches build-out, developers are already looking at vertical commercial and residential projects. In Sunrise, taller, higher-density developments are planned near the Sawgrass Mills mall - the second most popular tourist destination in Florida - and the Office Depot Center, home of the Florida Panthers hockey team.

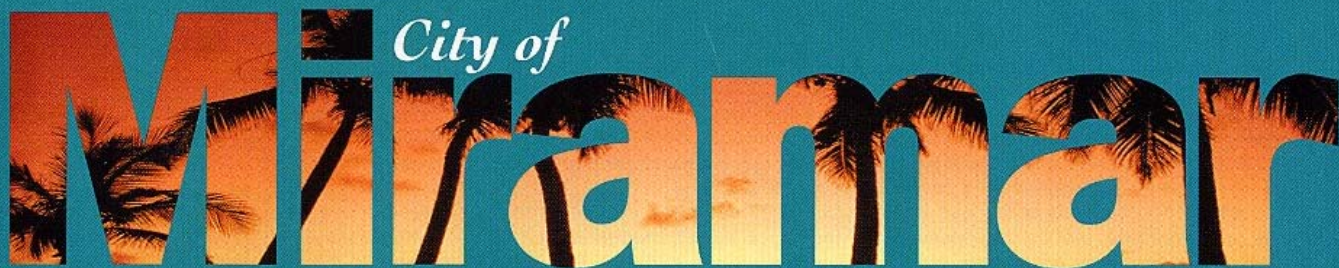
"The city's vision is to turn Sunrise into a central hub for western Broward," says Jim Rosewater, a partner at Davie-based

**Just a few of the "household names"
that call Miramar home.**



Delta Airlines *Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines* **NBC 6**
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AT&T Broadband *Bank of America* *American Express*
SmithKline Beecham *Memorial Hospital* **Premier Beverage**
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General Motors **BellSouth** **FedEx Corporation**
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